

Message Text

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ACTION AF-07

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CVIS, TGEN, MA

SUBJECT: FOREIGN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN MADAGASCAR RESTRICTED

1. EMBASSY SCIOFF CALLED ON GOMR DIRECTOR OF SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL RESEARCH, ETIENNE RAKOTOMARIA OCT 28 TO CLARIFY STATUS OF RESEARCH PERMIT APPLICATION MADE BY ANNE MERTLE, AMCIT ZOOLOGY GRADUATE STUDENT WHO WANTS TO STUDY RARE LEMUR CATTA. RAKOTOMARIA TOLD EMBOFF THAT APPLICATION IN QUESTION HAD BEEN REFUSED, AND THAT ALL APPLICATIONS BY AMERICANS FOR RESEARCH PERMITS WOULD BE TURNED DOWN IN FORESEEABLE FUTURE. RAKOTOMARIA QUICKLY ADDED HE WAS OPPOSED TO SUCH MEASURES AND HAD ATTEMPTED TO ASSURE LIBERAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS RESEARCH. HE POINTED OUT THAT AS GOMR OFFICIAL WITH AUTHORITY TO GRANT OR DENY RESEARCH PERMITS HE HAD REPEATEDLY OVERRULED NEGATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS OF MINISTRY OF INTERIOR. HE INDICATED THAT PRESSURE HAD MOUNTED AND, GIVEN HIS LOW POSITION IN GOVT, HE COULD NO LONGER IGNORE MINISTRY'S OPPOSITION TO RESEARCH BY FOREIGNERS.

3. EMBOFF NOTED PRESENCE OF SOVIET SCIENTISTS AND RED CHINESE MEDICAL RESEARCHERS AND ASKED IF BAN APPLIED ONLY TO AMERICANS AND OTHER WESTERNERS. RAKOTOMARIA SAID EMPHATICALLY NO, AND THAT SOVIETS AND CHINESE WERE IN COUNTRY UNDER DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES (PRESUMEDLY IN CONNECTION WITH DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AND TEACHING ASSIGN-
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MENTS).

3. RAKOTOMARIA SEEMED APOLOGETIC THAT MALAGASY EMBASSY WASHINGTON HAD NOT DISCOURAGED MISS MERTLE SOONER AND LET HER TRAVEL AS FAR AS NAIROBI, WHEN IN FACT THERE WAS NO HOPE OF OBTAINING PERMIT.

4. EMBASSY HAS ALSO LEARNED THHAT ASSOCIATE CURATOR OF MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY OF NEW YORK, DR. IAN TATTERSALL, A BRITISH SUBJECT, IS BEING EXPELLED FROM COUNTRY NEXT WEEK. TATTERSALL, HERE UNDER AUSPICES OF THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY, WAS TOLD TO LEAVE COUNTRY BY OFFICIAL OF MINISTRY OF INTERIOR, IN SPITE RECOMMENDATION BY PRESTIGIOUS ACADEMIE MALGACHE (EQUIVALENT OF NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES). HIS APPLICATION FOR RESEARCH PERMIT WAS REFUSED JULY 17, WITHOUT HIS KNOWLEDGE, BUT HE HAD BEEN PERMITTED TO REMAIN ON TOURIST VISA THROUGH INTERVENTION OF RAKOTOMARIA. TATTERSALL CASE COMPLICATED BY HIS HAVING BEEN COMPANION OF GERMAN RESEARCHER WHO RECENTLY DIED UNDER SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES. GOMR AUTHORITIES ARE INVESTIGATING AND TATTERSALL CONSIDERED KEY WITNESS, NOT SUSPECT, BUT GOMR MAY OBSCURE HIS INVOLVEMENT IN JUSTIFYING EXPULSION.

5. EARLIER IN WEEK LOCAL NEWSPAPER CARRIED STORY OF TWO FRENCH RESEARCHERS WHO WERE EXPELLED ON 24-HOUR NOTICE. EMBASSY HAS LEARNED SECONDHAND THAT THEY WERE ACCUSED OF BIOLOGICAL SABOTAGE, AGAIN BY MINISTRY OF INTERIOR.

6. EMBASSY COMMENTS: RAKOTOMARIA IS KNOWN TO EMBASSY AS ONE WHO HAS GONE OUT OF HIS WAY TO AID VISITING AMERICAN RESEARCHERS. HE HAS CONSISTENTLY ATTEMPTED TO BLOCK RESTRICTIONS ON RESEARCH. EARLIER IN YEAR HE GRANTED THREE RESEARCH PERMITS IN TOUCHY AREA OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AFTER MINISTRY OF INTERIOR HAD SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED THAT NO FURTHER PERMITS BE GIVEN IN THIS AREA. APPARENTLY XENOPHOBIC ELEMENTS IN MINISTRY OF INTERIOR HAVE SUCCEEDED IN STOPPING RAKOTOMARIA'S LIBERAL INFLUENCE -- WHICH IS CONSISTENT WITH OTHER EFFORTS OF MINISTER OF INTERIOR RATSIMANDRAVA TO INCREASINGLY EXCLUDE FOREIGNERS FROM COUNTRYSIDE. ALTHOUGH ALL PRIVATE RESEARCH BY AMERICANS IN MADAGASCAR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IS NOW APPARENTLY IMPOSSIBLE, EMBASSY EXPECTS THAT U.S. GOVT-SPONSORED RESEARCH MAY STILL BE POSSIBLE BUT DIFFICULT.
MENDENHALL

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